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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 8 October 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. BADRAN

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Future meetings of the Committee

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GE.92-17866 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 13)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited members to decide on the organization of work for future meetings, namely the pre-sessional period in December and the Committee's actual session, which would be held for three weeks in January.

2. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said he would like to know how long the December meeting was to last.

3. The CHAIRMAN replied that the pre-sessional meeting would last one week, from Monday, 14 December to Friday, 18 December 1992.

4. Mr. KOLOSOV said that, by the December meeting, the Committee would have before it at least five initial reports by States parties. He proposed that five members should be designated, each to evaluate one report and to provide the Committee with a draft questionnaire containing a list of issues to be considered in January. A precise timetable should be set for the consideration of each report and Governments should be informed, through their missions at Geneva, in time for the January session.

5. As the reports were considered, it would be useful to study the country files and take into account the information provided by the various specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations. Thus, following the December meeting, it should be possible to have five lists of issues to be considered in January in constructive dialogues between the Committee and the governmental delegations. The lists of issues should also be distributed to all Committee members so that the member in charge of a particular report was not burdened with raising all the issues.

6. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said she thought it unnecessary to prepare a specific agenda. Obviously, members would have to devote a large part of their time to considering the reports of States parties; however, it was important first to determine how the tasks were to be allocated among them. It would be preferable to assign the consideration of a report not to one person but to two or three, who would then report their findings to the other members. The Committee had received five reports and would perhaps have eight or nine by the December meeting. Besides the consideration of reports by States parties, the Committee should, in particular, include certain items on its provisional agenda: results of the meetings of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, number of accessions, the reservations, declarations and objections to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reminders to States parties whose reports were late, question of children in armed conflicts, seminars on social and economic indicators, methods of work and system documentation and information. She suggested that three members of the Committee should be entrusted with studying the question of system documentation and information and of coordination with other United Nations specialized agencies or competent bodies. In that connection she noted that, like ILO, UNHCR was prepared to welcome the Committee and show it how its own information system functioned.

7. Mrs. EUFEMIO said it was her understanding that the December meeting had been confirmed. She also had the impression that Mr. Kolosov was speaking of the work to be prepared for that meeting, while Mrs. Santos Pais was considering both the December and January meetings. In any event, it was important to make a clear distinction between the pre-sessional meeting and the actual session itself. Like Mr. Kolosov, she wished to stress that reports should arrive with enough time for the Committee to be able to study them before the December meeting, and she noted that the tasks for that purpose had not been allocated. In addition, the Committee should not neglect consideration of the information included in each heading of the guidelines, which for the time being did not go beyond defining the concept of child. In that connection it would be remembered that every member had at the first session tacitly agreed to perform certain tasks: Miss Mason was responsible for collecting information on special measures for the protection of children, in particular in cases of children in conflict with the law and children being exploited; Mr. Mombeshora was to look into the question of children's health and welfare; the general principles of the guidelines had been entrusted to Mrs. Badran, Mrs. Santos Pais, Mrs. Belembaogo and Mr. Kolosov. All those items should appear on the agenda of the pre-sessional meeting.

8. Mr. HAMMARBERG said he welcomed the idea of visiting other organizations, such as ILO and UNHCR, in order to see how they worked and how they might help the Committee to perform its task. As to the Committee's meetings, the December meeting should be used to prepare the agenda and organize the work schedule for the January session. The consideration of a State party's report, the relevant country file and information from the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations should take approximately three hours. In view of the fact that the Committee would have received eight or nine reports by the next session and that one report was 50 to 100 pages long (not counting annexes, which were not translated), members would have considerable work to accomplish between December and January, which, as everyone knew, was not a particularly favourable period in that respect. Unlike Mr. Kolosov, he believed that it would not be helpful to divide the work, at least in the beginning, even though one member of the Committee might be more familiar than another with the situation in a particular country or more familiar with a particular aspect of the report. The Committee should attempt to develop a common approach when it examined the first reports and not assign tasks among members until it had done so.

9. Mr. MILJETEIG-OLSSEN (United Nations Children's Fund) asked the Chairman whether the pre-sessional meeting in December would hold closed or public meetings and whether the Committee envisaged a contribution by the specialized agencies and other competent bodies.

10. The CHAIRMAN replied that that was for the Committee to decide; however, she believed that the session would include both closed and public meetings.

11. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS explained that the question had been discussed in closed meetings and the results had therefore not been made public. For the Committee, which would be following the example of other United Nations bodies monitoring human rights treaties, it would be appropriate for the reports of States parties to be considered at closed meetings, although that should not in any way undermine the interaction between the Committee and other bodies

which, in the spirit of the Convention, might provide it with technical assistance and advisory services in their fields of activity.

12. Mr. MILJETEIG-OLSSEN (United Nations Children's Fund) said he would appreciate it if the secretariat would inform all the specialized agencies sufficiently in advance for them to be able to plan to attend and contribute to the meetings.

13. The CHAIRMAN explained that members of the Committee would most probably have an average of 10 days to 2 weeks to study the reports in advance, and that the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned could if necessary be approached within the same time period in order to enable them to prepare for the session.

14. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that the earliest possible notice should be given to the two main actors in the process of the consideration of reports, namely the Governments, so that they could prepare to send a representative to the January session, at which their reports were to be considered, and the specialized agencies, which should be sent a precise programme of work for the pre-sessional meeting in December with enough time for them to be able to prepare for it.

15. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said that it was important to know whether the January session would last two weeks or three weeks, in order to determine the number of reports that it would be possible to consider.

16. The CHAIRMAN said the session was expected to last three weeks, but no final decision had yet been taken.

17. Mr. HOUSHMAND (Representative of the Secretary-General) said that the meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be held in New York on 11 November. He hoped that the recommendation of the Committee at its first session concerning the length of its sessions would be approved on that occasion; in any event, the General Assembly would have to ask the Secretary-General to take steps to release the funds before the recommendation could be implemented. The expected duration of the session was for the moment two weeks, but the Centre for Human Rights had already informed Conference Services Division that the session might be extended.

18. Mr. HAMMARBERG said he believed that the proposal to be presented to the meeting of States parties to the Convention was to hold two sessions a year of two to three weeks each. If the proposal was approved, he would like to know who would take the decision to extend the length of each session by one week.

19. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the discussion should continue at the following meeting, to enable members to attend the press conference which the Committee's spokesperson was to give for journalists accredited by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.